

# Theodore Roosevelt

## National Park North Dakota

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



This national park honors Theodore Roosevelt. His North Dakota cattle ranches during the 1880s and 1890s constituted a laboratory in which his philosophy of practical conservation was nurtured. He also learned to understand the West here—its problems and its rugged settlers. The national conservation policy of his presidency (1901-1909) was based upon wise use of the nation’s natural resources in the public interest—a milestone in resource management in this country!

*“I never would have been President if it had not been for my experiences in North Dakota,”* Theodore Roosevelt once remarked when reflecting on the influences that affected him throughout his life.

### THE COWBOY

Roosevelt first came to the badlands in September 1883. Before returning home to New York, he became interested in the cattle business and joined two other men as partners in the Maltese Cross Ranch. The next year he returned and established a second open-range ranch, the Elkhorn.

The prospect of hunting had initially brought Roosevelt to the West. But when he arrived the last large herds of bison were gone. He witnessed the virtual disappearance of some big game species and saw the grasslands destroyed due to overgrazing. Conservation increasingly became one of Roosevelt’s major concerns.

### THE LAND

The colorful North Dakota badlands provides the scenic backdrop to the park. The various layers of rock that can be seen were deposited between 55 and 60 million years ago. This land, which Theodore Roosevelt found “fantastically beautiful,” has been carved by rain and melting snow, wind and the waters of the Little Missouri River.

The park is home to a great variety of creatures and plants. The 15 inches of precipitation each year nourishes grasses and wildflowers. Over 500 different species of plants including prairie coneflower and prickly-pear cactus plus juniper and cottonwood trees are found here. Almost 200 species of birds have been observed. Both mule and white-tailed deer inhabit the park. Other animals, including bison, wild horses, elk, prairie dogs and coyotes also inhabit the park.

### WARNINGS

#### WILD ANIMALS ARE DANGEROUS!

**BUFFALO** are dangerous. Although wild, they have lost much of their fear of people, and may attack if provoked. For your safety, please view them from a distance!

**PRAIRIE DOGS** can inflict a painful bite if you attempt to feed or tease them. Like all warm-blooded animals, prairie dogs can transmit serious infectious diseases to humans.

**REMEMBER** that many wild species are most active during hours of darkness. Bison and deer may react unpredictably when confused or blinded by the light of an approaching vehicle. To avoid collision, drive with extra caution at night.

### REGULATIONS

**USE MOTOR VEHICLES AND BICYCLES** only on designated roads. Offroad vehicular use is prohibited.

**KEEP PETS LEASHED** and under control; they are not allowed on trails or in buildings.

**HORSES** are prohibited in campgrounds and picnic areas and on self-guiding trails.

**LEAVE ALL NATURAL FEATURES UNDISTURBED.** Collecting is prohibited.

**BUILD FIRES ONLY IN FIRE GRATES** provided at campgrounds and picnic areas. Fires are prohibited in the backcountry. Gathering down or green wood is prohibited.

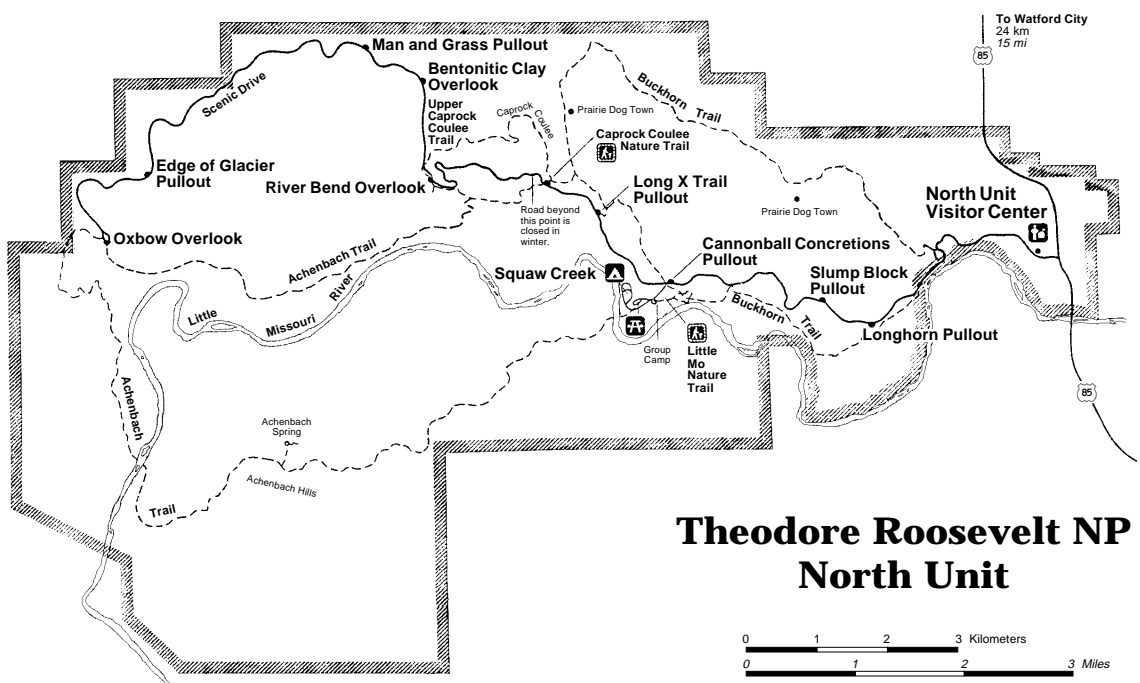
**CHASING OR OTHERWISE HARASSING WILDLIFE**, including approaching wildlife on horseback, is illegal.

**COLLECTION** of skulls, antlers and other **ANIMAL PARTS** is **ILLEGAL.**

**WEAPONS** must be broken down and encased. Hunting is prohibited.



The park, open all year, is busiest from May through October. In winter, portions of the park road system may be closed. Check at the park visitor centers for information on interpretive programs during the summer months. Backcountry camping permits are available at the visitor centers.



NORTH UNIT

Stop at the visitor center (open daily April–September, open weekends and most weekdays during winter) to plan your visit. A scenic drive (14 miles) has turnouts with spectacular views and interpretive signs.

Little Mo (1.1 miles) and Caprock Coulee (1.6 miles) nature trails are self-guided and interpret the badlands, coulees, and breaks. Upper Caprock Coulee, Achenbach, and Buckhorn trails take you into the backcountry.

ELKHORN RANCH SITE

A dirt road connects the Elkhorn Ranch Site to the South Unit. No buildings or signs remain at the site. Please inquire at the visitor center *before* attempting the trip.

SOUTH UNIT

Medora (open daily year-round, except winter holidays) and Painted Canyon (open daily April–October) visitor centers offer exhibits, audiovisual programs, book sales, and information. The Maltese Cross Cabin, Roosevelt’s first ranch home, is located adjacent to the Medora Visitor Center.

A scenic loop drive (36 miles) has several turnouts with interpretive signs.

Ridgeline (0.6 mile) and Coal Vein (0.8 mile) nature trails are short, self-guided trails that interpret the geology, ecology and history of the badlands. Petrified Forest, Jones Creek, Paddock Creek, and Talkington trails are popular backcountry routes.

A concessionaire offers trail rides at Peaceful Valley Ranch during the summer.

